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ABSTRACT

This WY Kids Count brochure uses the metaphor of children's building blocks to present information on the current well-being of Wyoming children and to advocate enhancing the lives of young children. Each block (i.e., each develop the brochure) presents concerns in a separate area: (1) poverty, highlighting the number of children living in poverty, side effects of poverty, and strategies for reducing poverty; (2) child abuse, focusing on the Shaken Baby Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; (3) child care and preschool education, especially with regard to program quality and infant care; (4) health care, focusing on access to health care, low birth weight infants, and nutrition; and (5) parenting skills, focusing on ways to provide nurturing to children. For each area, information is presented on the extent of the problem, pertinent information, strategies to prevent or reduce the severity of the problem or address the concerns, and available resources. Finally, the efforts of Wyoming Kids Count are described and contact information is given. (KB)

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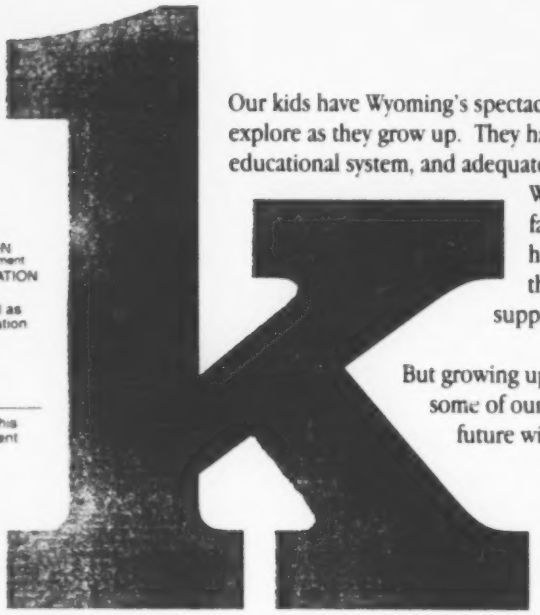
Most of Wyoming's children start with the basic building blocks.



Our kids have Wyoming's spectacular and wide-open spaces to explore as they grow up. They have a safe environment, a good educational system, and adequate health care. Most of Wyoming's children have families that love them, know how to care for them, and have the economic resources to support them.

But growing up, even in Wyoming, is hard for some of our kids, and they look to the future with little hope or aspirations.

Wyoming has many of the same problems as our neighbors and the big cities. Too many Wyoming families live in poverty, and have problems with health care and poor nutrition. Too many Wyoming parents lack adequate parenting skills and access to quality child care. Some Wyoming children are abused. We can change this.

Let's stack the blocks to make all Wyoming kids count.

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Child care and preschool programs are a part of every day for many Wyoming children.

Statewide, 24,475 children under six years of age have both parents, or their only parent, in the labor force.[4] Up to 60% of our children are in some form of child care.

Concerns in early care and education include:

- Quality. Licensed providers meet health, nutrition, and safety standards, and complete eight hours of training per year. Seventy-four percent of Wyoming parents polled said the training of providers is important, and 62% would be willing to pay more for higher quality services.[5]

- Infant care. In Cheyenne, for example, there is a one in seventy-eight chance of finding an opening for infants.[6]

- Serving low income families and children with disabilities with preschool, home visits and health services. The Head Start Program served 1,128 children,[7] and the Wyoming Division of Developmental Disabilities served 1,626 children.

Resources: Your local child care association, The Wyoming Early Childhood Association 733-3791, Care Connections (800) 696-6922, Head Start 332-7163, Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division 777-5246, Wyoming Preschool Directors Association 682-2392, and The Parent Information Center (800) 660-9742.

Children's health care is a Wyoming concern.

1,403 Wyoming children, or 10.9%, do not have current immunizations.[8] Over 2,000 are without access to health care, and 9.4% are not covered by health insurance.[9]

Low-birth weight babies made up 7.3% of Wyoming births. Mothers 15 to 19 years old have an 11.1% chance of having a low-weight baby, while mothers 20 years and older have a 6.8% chance.[10]

Prerequisites for healthy young children:

- Expectant mothers making use of prenatal care programs and minimizing high-risk behavior like poor diet, smoking, drinking, drugs, and lack of exercise.
- Families and care providers maintaining a safe environment.
- Policy makers supporting home and community-based health programs.
- Reducing teen births.
- Supporting health care initiatives that reach every child.

Resources: Local Public Health Nurses, doctors or other health care providers, the Wyoming Best Beginnings Program 777-7944, Uplift 638-9361, the Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies Coalition, P.O. Box 1908, Cheyenne, WY 82003, and for insurance assistance: The Caring Program for Children - Blue Cross/Blue Shield (800) 544-9364.

Children need nurturing to become competent, caring, responsible adults.

Raising children is challenging. In Wyoming in 1993 there were 52 substantiated cases of emotional abuse and neglect, and 478 cases of lack of supervision and neglectful treatment.[11]

We can provide nurturing:

- Love and really care about children. Help children develop a sense of security, belonging and support.
- Teach children right from wrong. Values and manners are best taught at home. Set personal examples of moral courage, integrity, and compassion.
- Turn off the TV and spend time with children. Play, talk, and read with your child. Develop a family spirit and give children a sense of belonging.
- Discipline constructively. Give clear directions and enforce limits. Teach self-control through "time-outs." Help children learn to resolve conflict, and to understand the consequences of their actions.
- Foster independence. Gradually allow growing children more freedom and control over their lives.

Resources: Your local church, library, schools, pre-schools, child care centers, Public Health Nurse, and mental health center. "Read to Me Campaign" (Chairman Terry Guice - Rotary Club 745-8289), The Wyoming Reading Council 634-8220, and the Wyoming P.A.R.E.N.T. TALKLINE (800) 400-3999 or 638-4000.

WY KIDS COUNT

WY KIDS COUNT seeks to raise public awareness about the well-being of Wyoming's children, support efforts to build better communities for our children, and share Wyoming solutions to Wyoming problems.

WY KIDS COUNT collects, analyzes, and distributes information concerning health, education, child care, poverty, juvenile justice, and many other issues affecting Wyoming families and children. May we be a resource for you?

For more information, or to join **WY KIDS COUNT** efforts, contact Mike Moe or Zeta Walling at 1807 Capitol Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82001. Phone (800) 400-3999 or (307) 638-4000.

We work in cooperation with the University of Wyoming, the Wyoming Community Foundation, the State Departments of Administration and Information, Family Services, Health, Education, and a host of private organizations. **WY KIDS COUNT** is a project of Wyoming P.A.R.E.N.T. and is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

WY KIDS COUNT is working to stack the basic building blocks for Wyoming's children.

(Please take a moment to notify us if you receive duplicates of our publications, wish to be removed from our mailing list, or would like to suggest other parties we should include in our mailings)

1. 1990 U.S. Census.
2. Jan. 1994, WIC Program, Wyoming Dept. of Health 777-7494.
3. 1993 Wyoming Dept. of Family Services, 777-7561.
4. 1990 U.S. Census.
5. 1992 The University of Wyoming Survey Research Center for Wyoming P.A.R.E.N.T.
6. 1993 Care Connections Inc., (800) 696-6922.
7. 1991 U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.
8. 1993 Wyoming Dept. of Health, Immunizations 777-7932.
9. 1993 The Caring Program for Children, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, (800) 544-9364.
10. 1992 Wyoming Department of Health, Vital Records, 777-7264.

One out of every seven Wyoming children lives in poverty.

Poverty is real for 7,606 Wyoming children under six years of age, and 12,386 children between six and eighteen.[1] Wyoming children living in poverty are found in towns (61%) and rural settings (39%).

Side effects of poverty often begin with medical problems at birth, and progress to substandard health care, poor nutrition, an unsafe and insecure home, low self-esteem, teen pregnancy, school dropouts, and delinquency.

12,767 low-income Wyoming children received benefits through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program in 1993. The Wyoming WIC Program provided food and nutrition counseling to 8,391 low-income and at-nutritional-risk infants and children in January 1994.[2]

Reducing childhood poverty includes:

- Citizens voicing poverty concerns to policy makers.
- Support of programs addressing the *roots and results* of childhood poverty.
- Individuals accepting increased responsibility for improving their conditions.
- Citizens donating time and money to poverty reducing programs.
- Parents earning sufficient wages and having access to job retraining.

Resources: Local poverty programs, churches, Dept. of Family Services and WIC Offices, national organizations such as Bread for the World (800) 82-BREAD and the Children's Defense Fund (202) 628-8787. Senators and Representatives: state 777-7881, and federal (202) 224-3121.

Child abuse . . . even in Wyoming.

Statewide in 1993, there were 1,416 substantiated cases of children being abused physically, sexually, through neglect, through psychological terror, and or other maltreatment. Sexual abuse and incest accounted for 255 cases. Major physical injuries accounted for 33 cases. Abuse increased 43% between 1985 and 1993.[3]

One form of often unintentional abuse, Shaken Baby Syndrome, occurs when a young child is shaken in anger *or in play*, resulting in internal bleeding, disabilities, and sometimes death. Another abuse, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, occurs when an expectant mother drinks alcohol, *perhaps even a small amount*. FAS can cause mental retardation, emotional disorders, physical defects, and death.

Preventing child abuse involves:

- Parents reducing anger by counting to 30, visualizing how angry words will sound to a child, leaving the room, and seeking help when necessary.
- Concerned individuals learning about abuse prevention, and getting involved.
- Businesses supporting prevention efforts.
- Voters and policy makers supporting prevention legislation.

Resources: The Laramie County Council for Prevention of Child Abuse 637-8622, Wyoming Dept. of Family Services 777-7922, Child Abuse HELP U.S.A. (800) 422-4453, ABUSED at (800) 544-8837.
For youth and family support: Big Brothers Big Sisters, Foster Grandparents, and similar organizations.

wy kids count

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1 (800) 400-3999
or (307) 638-4000

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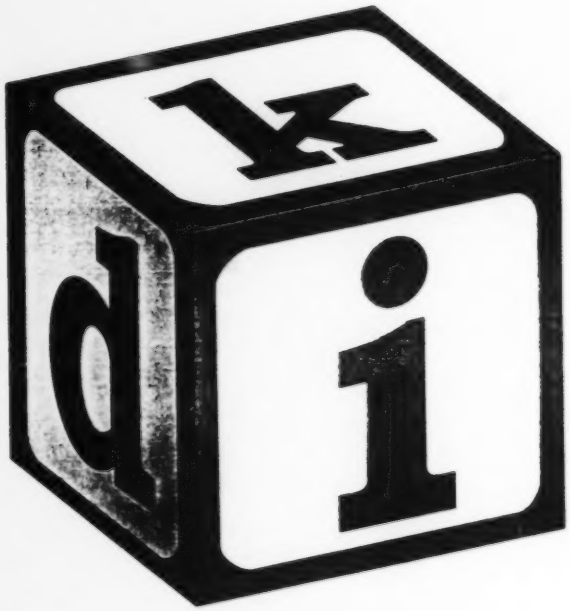

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